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ABSTRACT

This manual contains rules for playing both training and contest versions of LAG (Language Assistant Game). LAG (Training) is designed to give language assistants practice in the general teaching skill of explaining. One of the many problems that may confront the assistant in the classroom is the situation where, after reading a passage or telling a story, the studerts ask questions. LAG simulates the situation in which a pupil does not understand a work or phrase. The explainer (teacher) is encouraged to use particular types of explanation. By not allowing the explainer to use the unknown word to be guessed, but if necessary a nonsense word in its place, the game approximates the real situation, in which the class will be unable to understand the unknown word, because it has as little meaning as a nonsense word. The graduated scores for various types of explanation also encourage the more useful types, in preference to direct translation. LAG (Contest) is a version of the game which may be used as a culmination of collective LAG (Training) with several contestants; it may also be used directly with a class of foreign learners of English. The manual contains rules, examples of LAG words, score cards, technique cards, and word cards. (Author/CFM)

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LANGUAGE

ASSISTANT

GAME

Playing Manual ..... Training Contest

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LAG
Language Assistant Game

This manual contains rules for playing both versions of the game, Training and Contest. LAG (Training) is designed to be used in training language assistants. One of the many problems that may confront the assistant in the classroom, is the situation where after reading a passage or telling a story, the class ask questions. Often these questions are simply "What does ——— mean?" - or, the assistant may in anticipation of there being words that need explaining, ask for words that the class don't know (he will have prepared his explanation beforehand if possible, but in some class situations anticipation is not possible). The assistant's aim in explaining will be first of all to ensure the pupils understand the meaning of the word or phrase in its context, but also to give pupils further practice in listening to and using English to improve their active and passive command of the language. For various reasons connected with the above aims, many teachers of English believe the most useful types of explanation used in teaching the language are not the ones relying on a direct translation (-there is not always an exact equivalent or you may not know it-), but ones which enrich the students grasp of the contexts, usages, and connotations of the word or phrase involved. So giving examples of a word (vegetable: "carrots, peas, potatoes are vegetables") or showing how a word is used in context (the penny's dropped: "In every class there is a pupil who doesn't understand something, so we all struggle to make him understand, and finally he does understand, so we say: 'At last the penny's dropped'". Having used these methods in the classroom one has of course to check each time that the pupil has understood by asking him to re-use the expression, or to give a different type of explanation. As well as checking comprehension this is also a way of reinforcing learning, and encouraging active use of English.

LAG is a game that simulates the situation where a pupil does not understand a word or phrase. The explainer (teacher) is encouraged to use particular types of explanation to explain the word. By not allowing the explainer to use the unknown word to be guessed, but if necessary a nonsense word (lag, laggish, etc.) in its place, the game approximates to the real situation, i.e. where the class will be unable to understand the unknown word, for it has as little meaning as a nonsense word. The graduated scores for different types of explanation also encourage the more useful types, in preference to direct translation (though it should be remembered that the "best" type of explanation depends on the specific word to be explained.) Sometimes in the real situation, translation may be most appropriate, and sometimes a combination of different explanations will be appropriate.

LAG (Training), reproduced here is only one of the possible ways of playing the game (see Hare & McAleese, 1976 for other suggestions).

LAG (Contest) is a version of the game which may be used not only as a culmination of collective LAG (Training) where several contestants are available, but also by working Assistants with a class of foreign learners of English. The competitive element of this latter version is particularly attractive at school level.

The Manual contains:

Rules

Examples of LAG words

Score cards

Technique cards*

Word cards*

* These will require to be cut up before playing.

The discussion of explaining in the rules is not and should not be considered to be definitive. There are other ways of explaining. For example, writing an apparently unknown word on the blackboard: if the lack of understanding is simply due to mis-hearing, or not associating the spoken version with a known written version, then seeing the written form of the word may be sufficient to cause the 'penny to drop'. We have not included this strategy in the game.

Good Luck!

LAG (Training)

Aim of the Game ...

LAG (Training) is intended to give trainee assistants practice in the general teaching skill of explaining. Explaining is defined as the skill of helping pupils understand or comprehend, of relating or saying how objects, events or affairs fit together, function or come about. Explaining has a number of sub-sets, sometimes they are mutually exclusive, sometimes they overlap,

giving an example ...		Harrow, Eton and Gordonstoun are examples of public schools
giving a description or definition ...		a large vehicle that can carry up to 50 fare paying passengers on the roads is a bus
	OR	to stump someone is to say something that the other person does not understand
using in context ...		before I go to bed I take my clothes off, I get 'undressed' (implied)
giving a synonym ...		policeman and bobby
demonstrating ...		cheers ... the player holds one hand as if holding a glass and then raises it to his mouth and saying 'Cheers!' (Lag)
giving a translation ...		uniform means uniforme or to be homesick is avoir le mal du pays, etc.

RULES ...

1. The game is played in threes. An explainer, a guesser and a referee. Players take it in turns, during a playing session, each player should have three turns at explaining.

2. A concept is agreed upon. For example, 'British Characteristics', 'My Home Town', etc. One that would arise in classroom teaching. (see suggested words for three concepts).

3. All three players write down 15 words or expressions related to the concept. Five minutes is the maximum time permitted. (You are provided with a 'Starter Kit' of words relating to British Characteristics, School and Football). You can write the words as a list on a sheet of paper, or on the blank cards provided.

4. Players are called Referee, Explainer and Guesser. The Referee gives his list of words to the Explainer (the person on his right) who attempts to explain the words to the Guesser on his right.

5. You are provided with a pack of cards relating to the technique of explaining to be used. Shuffle the cards and turn them facedown (TECHNIQUE CARD showing on top). WORD CARDS are placed adjacent (make sure the guesser can't see the words).

6. The explainer selects a Technique Card from the top of the pile and places it face up on the table, so that all three players can read it. He then selects the first word on his list or the top card on his Word pile and makes a discreet note on his Score Card of the Technique and the Word. The Explainer attempts to explain the word to his partner (see example below). Where the explainer must use the word being explained in order to make syntactical or grammatical sense he substitutes the words lag, lagging, or laggish. The word being explained must not of course be used. It is likely that it may sometimes be impossible to explain a particular word using the specific technique, for example, "demonstrate" a "public school". If this is the case the next Technique Card is turned over. The Explainer is not penalised. (Avoid using this let-out wherever the combination is only difficult rather than impossible).

   EXAMPLE

   The Explainer turns over the Technique Card "CONTEXT" and the Word Card "BUTTERFINGERS". He explains: ... when a player in a ball game like rugby or cricket drops the ball when it has been thrown or hit towards him in such a way that he was expected to catch it easily, the crowd may call him ... LAG!

7. The guesser is allowed one attempt and if a word is guessed correctly the explainer gets the score related to the technique used. The following scores apply:

example	6 points
context	6 points
description/ definition .	5 points
demonstrate ..	3 points
synonym	3 points
translation ..	1 point

If the guesser cannot guess the word, there is no score.

8. If the guesser challenges the technique, i.e. thinks that the technique used by the explainer is not that selected, and the referee agrees, then no score is given for that attempt.

9. Normally there is no time limit for the explainer to complete his list, but a maximum of 5 minutes may be agreed in advance.

10. When there is a dispute, the referee is the sole arbiter.

11. On completion of a turn, the Explainer becomes the Referee, the Guesser becomes the Explainer, and the Referee is the Guesser. Play rotates anticlockwise. On each occasion, the Explainer uses words devised by the player on his left.

12. The game should emphasise practice at explaining not at guessing. The guesser is playing a collaborative role judging whether in the real situation a pupil would have been able to understand, not acting as a member of a panel. He should be helpful. However the competitive element does add further interest to the game.

13. The winner is the player with most points.

14. Players should keep a record of the techniques used. Practice is then possible in seldom-used categories.

LAC Words

British Characteristics (EASY)*

town planning
dour
out of date
to care about
pub
darts
policeman
cheers!
fish and chips
helmet
kilt
time gentlemen please!
bacon and eggs
public school
umbrella

General Expressions (VERY DIFFICULT)*

to fall in with
to stump someone
to undress
to come again
to be afraid of
over and over again
the morning after
the night before
near at hand

School (AVERAGE)*

assembly
uniform
comprehensive school
public school
a double period
bicycle shed
prefects
school council
homework
take 100 lines!
class exam
boarding school
detention
form master
school report

Football (HARD)*

goal
score
penalty
goalie
forward
off-side
tactics
a foul
referee
linesman
supporters
home team
away match
corner
throw in

* Not all words or phrases are easily explained. In the real situation it may occasionally be necessary to give a translation, however; for the purpose of the game players should attempt to use other methods to explain even the 'hard' words. As players become more experienced, even 'hard' words can be thus explained.

LAC (Training)

SCORE CARD NAME_____

(You score only when you are explaining)

(For technique you may use the following abbreviations,
Example (E); Context (C); Description/Definition (DD);
Demonstrate (D); Synonym (S); Translation (T)).

WORD	TECHNIQUE	SCORE

LAG (Contest)

Aim of the Game ...

LAG (Contest) is a classroom game that can be used in assistant work in either conversation classes or in less formal club meetings. For example, the Franco-British Club, etc. The aim of the game is to find the Chief Lag of the class or group. The Chief Lag is the person who can score most points in a game of explaining words (LAG).

RULES ...

1. A teacher or someone in authority should be selected as referee.

2. The referee should provide a list of words for the game. Approximately 15 words per player are required. These words should be those found in normal conversation or in English language text books of the class concerned.

3. A panel comprising four members is selected. Their job is to guess the words explained by the explainer.

4. The explainer is given a list of words (or better still a pack of cards with words written on one side) which must be explained to the panel. Any technique apart from using the French (or the English ... see below) translation of the word itself is allowed. In place of the word, the words lag, lagging and laggish may be used.

5. An audience or the other explainers should be able to know which words the explainer is attempting to explain. (An overhead projector or a blackboard can be used. The panel sitting with their backs to the screen or board).

6. The panel, after consultation, is allowed one guess at the explanation.

7. The explainer is allowed as many attempts as he or she wants, and scores one point for a correct guess.

8. Only three minutes are allowed for any one explainer.

9. The referee keeps a score. The explainer with most points at the end is declared the Chief Lag. In the event of a tie, the referee should be prepared to have an elimination round (a spare list of words, with tied contestants explaining in turn until they fail).

10. In cases of dispute the referee is the final judge of fact and interpretation.

These are only a basic framework of rules that permit the game to be organised. It is desirable that in the classroom or club situation the players are involved in rule making, for example, the number of guesses the panel is allowed for a given explanation or the time allocated to the explainer to complete his list. However, the assistant should be aware that pupils can be very pedantic in making and interpreting rules.

Tailpiece ...

... the game need not be played in English!

LAG (Contest)

SCORE CARD (For Referee)

Explainer's Name	Attempt (Mark for correct, blank for incorrect)																	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	

TECHNIQUE
CARD

TECHNIQUE
CARD

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EXAMPLE

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

EXAMPLE

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

EXAMPLE

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

CONTEXT

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

CONTEXT

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

DESCRIPTION/
DEFINITION

Score 5

TECHNIQUE

DEMONSTRATE

Score 3

TECHNIQUE

SYNONYM

Score 3

TECHNIQUE

EXAMPLE

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

EXAMPLE

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

CONTEXT

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

CONTEXT

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

DESCRIPTION/
DEFINITION

Score 5

TECHNIQUE

DEMONSTRATE

Score 3

TECHNIQUE

SYNONYM

Score 3

TECHNIQUE

EXAMPLE

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

CONTEXT

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

CONTEXT

Score 6

TECHNIQUE

DESCRIPTION/
DEFINITION

Score 5

TECHNIQUE

DEMONSTRATE

Score 3

TECHNIQUE

TRANSLATION

French 1

WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD

British Characteristics

town planning

British Characteristics

dour

British Characteristics

out of date

British Characteristics

to care about

British Characteristics

pub

British Characteristics

darts

British Characteristics

policeman

British Characteristics

cheers!

British Characteristics

fish and chips

British Characteristics

helmet
(policeman)

British Characteristics

kilt

British Characteristics

time gentlemen
please!

British Characteristics

bacon and eggs

British Characteristics

public school

British Characteristics

umbrella

WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD

School

assembly

School

uniform

School

comprehensive school

School

public school

School

a double period

School

bicycle shed

School

prefects

School

detention

School

school council

School

homework

School

take 100 lines!

School

class exam

School

form master

School

boarding school

School

school report

WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD
WORD CARD	WORD CARD	WORD CARD

Football

goal

Football

score

Football

penalty

Football

goalie

Football

forward

Football

off-side

Football

tactics

Football

a foul

Football

referee

Football

linesman

Football

supporters

Football

home team

Football

away match

Football

corner

Football

throw in